



(U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sean A. Foley)

## Peek-a-boo!

**Pfc. Casey Blackwell, a paratrooper with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, pulls security behind a fallen palm tree during a route clearance patrol in Hawr Rajab, Iraq, a suburb south of Baghdad.**

# The transition to Provincial Iraqi Control

**By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen  
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs**

BAGHDAD - A little more than two weeks into his own transition as the commanding general of the Multi-National Division - Baghdad, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr. has already met twice with Iraqi provincial government leaders and is determined to continue to help move the process forward.

"All four provinces are coming along smoothly, making positive strides every day," Fil said. "The way ahead is transitioning to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) where they are in the lead in all aspects of running their government."

Coalition forces under Fil's control are assisting in this effort to establish local governance in the provinces of Najaf, Babil, Karbala and Baghdad.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

(PRT), consisting of Commanders and staff officers at every level of Fil's command, help to move the process along and make Iraqi control a reality.

The Provincial Security Transition Assessment (PSTA) - assists in the transition to PIC by providing an evaluation of current conditions and recommendations for the way ahead.

As the military's lead man in the PSTA process for the four provinces, Fil meets regularly with the governors of each to evaluate progress and discuss the way ahead.

### **Focused on all aspects of progress**

Assessing progress throughout four Iraqi provinces is a huge undertaking. The focus of the assessments is wide-ranging.

"The security situation in the provinces is a primary concern," said Col. William Rabena, effects coordinator for MND-B. "Eventually, Iraqis will be entire-

ly responsible for their own security, economic development, managing government programs, administration and infrastructure.

"It's the same thing any state governor would do back in America," Rabena added.

Rabena said the PSTA program evaluates progress in each of the provinces, based on criteria laid out from the Multi-National Force - Iraq.

"Maj. Gen. Fil makes recommendations on the means to keep the process moving forward to the military's top leadership and, ultimately, to the prime minister," Rabena said.

### **In every neighborhood**

"It all starts with Soldiers on the streets," said Capt. Leo Prescott, an operations and plans officer with MND-B who

# 'Ironhorse' brigade assumes responsibility in Taji

By Sgt. Cheryl Cox  
1-1st Cav. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - On a cool morning, a mere year-and-a-half after their return to Fort Hood, Texas, the Brigade Colors were once again placed atop of the flag pole as a sign of their assumption of responsibility for the area of operations here.

As the sun rose above the horizon Dec. 2, the 1st 'Ironhorse' Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division officially took command in the Taji region of Iraq with the commencement of the Transfer of Authority ceremony held outside the brigade's headquarters building here.

As the Soldiers of 1st 'Raider' Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division begin their journey home to Fort Hood, Texas, the Ironhorse Soldiers prepare themselves to look into the eyes of the same enemy they were fighting less

than two years ago.

"I know the Soldiers are prepared because of their training and close working relationship with the Soldiers of 4th Infantry Division," said Lt. Col. Kevin MacWatters, the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment commander following the transfer of authority ceremony. "Now it is a feeling of responsibility as we take over the area of operation and the multitude of tasks to protect ourselves and the Iraqi population."

During the ceremony, Col. Paul E. Funk II, Ironhorse Brigade commander, quoted former President Theodore Roosevelt saying "It is not the critics that count, but the men in the arena." Adding, "We are now in the arena."

Following the ceremony, Funk and Col. James Pasquarette, the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division commander, exchanged gifts of appreciation



(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

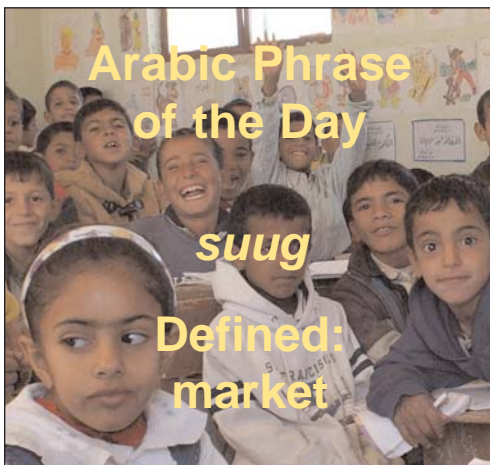
**Col. Paul E. Funk II (right), the 1st Brigade Combat Team commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Stanley D. Small, the brigade's senior noncommissioned officer, attach the first fastener onto the brigade colors during the Transfer of Authority ceremony at Camp Taji, Iraq.**

for the assistance and hard work that the Soldiers from each brigade had put into the deployment and transfer of authority missions.

"I want to thank all the Soldiers of both Raider and Ironhorse Brigades," said Pasquarette. "I have a lot of

Soldiers who are already on top of their mission, and have lots of love for the Soldiers of Raider Brigade."

"You have all taken the mission to heart and done what needs to be done to make it happen," he added.



## Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 70  
Low: 39



Tomorrow

High: 68  
Low: 39



Thursday

High: 59  
Low: 48

**Commanding General:** Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr.  
**Public Affairs Officer:** Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl  
**Command Information Supervisor:** Master Sgt. Dave Larsen  
**NCOIC, Print Production:** Staff Sgt. Mary Rose  
**Editor:** Sgt. Michael Garrett  
**Staff Writers:** Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, Spc. L.B. Edgar, Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma, Pfc. Ben Gable, Pfc. Shea Butler, Pfc. William Hatton  
**Contributing Writers:** Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, Sgt. Cheryl Cox

Contact the *Daily Charge* at VOIP 242-4093, DSN 318-847-2855 or e-mail [david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil](mailto:david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil).

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# Iraqis to take lead in controlling Baghdad

## Transition

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works closely on the PSTA program. "That local presence patrol assists in maintaining security, but they also encourage Iraqi security forces to take an active role in the effort through face-to-face interaction."

Prescott said improving the security situation in every neighborhood is the number one priority for troops on the ground, and create the conditions where local government can operate to make improvements.

"We're partners in their future, ensuring their success and negating sectarian violence," he said. "We're encouraging the people of Iraq to cherish progress and denounce Muslim on Muslim violence."

At the local level, battalion and company commanders meet with Neighborhood Advisory Councils. The NACs consist of local politicians and governmental representatives focused on the same issues at the neighborhood level.

The goal, Prescott said, is to ensure Iraqi police, firemen, security forces and infrastructure program improvements are addressed, and implemented. It's here, Prescott noted, that a hand shake and a smile can mean more than any governmental edict.

"Our Soldiers on patrol talk with local leaders - local residents, scholars, hospital administrators, fire, police and ISF members," Prescott said. "There's an American flag on our shoulders, evident in each neighborhood, showing our commitment to the future of the

Iraqi people."

### Advisory Councils

At the district level, local concerns are addressed and funding issues for improvement projects are discussed.

"Issues bubble up from the local level, to the district level, to provincial level and finally, the national level," said Major Craig Berryman, the deputy effects coordinator for MND-B.

"The focus remains on improving daily living conditions - providing trash pick-up, a functional sewage system, fresh water and electricity. Infrastructure improvements continue to be made throughout the districts because of the cooperative efforts at local levels."

Berryman, on his second deployment to Iraq, said he's seen improvements in the Iraqi capital since the 1st Cavalry Division left in early 2005.

"When I'm out, I see a lot less trash than two years ago," Berryman said. "It's been cleaned up. I see a lot of new buildings in parts of Baghdad, and more cell phone and communication towers throughout the city. In some places, there's new pavement."

"These are all physical, concrete signs of improvement in the two years since this division was last here," he said.

### Provincial assessments

The top layer of the PSTA program at the division level is a partnership with provincial government. It's at this level that the 1st Cavalry Division's commanding general becomes involved, with the assistance of his staff and subordinate commanders.

The reception of the First Team back in the Baghdad



(Photo by Pfc. Shea Butler, 7th MPAD)

**Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil Jr., Multi-National Division-Baghdad commanding general, talks business with Hussein Muhammad Ali Al Tahhan, governor of Baghdad, at the Falaniko House Nov. 29 in Baghdad. They met to track progress in Baghdad.**

region has been positive.

"We've been well received and well respected because we bring a balance," Berryman said. "We don't play favorites. A lot of people recognize our patch (of the 1st Cav. Div.). It brings a certain amount of respect from the last time we were here. The people remember us. For the most part, they have fond memories."

That mutual respect, Berryman said leads to continued improvements at all levels of governance.

Still, securing the streets from terrorists remains a top priority here.

"The current security situation is a reflection of the desperation of the terrorist element here. The terrorists are targeting the innocent, because

they're very narrow-minded," Berryman said. "It's only a very small percentage of the population with a narrow agenda that they want to see realized."

### Baghdad a focal point

"Baghdad is the center of gravity for the entire country," Fil said. "In many ways, as Baghdad goes, so goes Iraq."

Fil said the importance of the Iraqi capital to the future freedom of the Iraqi people cannot be over-valued.

"Baghdad is the cultural, social and economic center of the country," he continued. "It's a reflection of the Iraqi soul. It's why the coalition focused so much of its efforts here in the capital ... to give the people of Iraq a choice, a chance and a new future."

# 100th Soldier reenlists in Air Cav Brigade

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert  
1st Air Cav. Bde. Public Affairs

TAJI, Iraq - As a teenager in the Philippines, Lolito Dalindin's life was going nowhere.

Poverty and job scarcity made for a bleak future. But at 18, Dalindin got the opportunity to soar in a whirlwind year that took him to the United States and landed him in the U.S. Army.

Now a specialist in the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade serving in Taji, Iraq, Dalindin soars every night as a Black Hawk crew chief with the 'Warrior' Brigade.

And, he'll continue to soar since he chose on Nov. 30 to stay Army and stay Cav for six more years.

In fact, Dalindin was the 100th Soldier in the brigade to reenlist since the 1st ACB deployed in October.

"We had a lot of reenlisting Soldiers whose primary concern was to stay in the 1st Cavalry Division," said Sgt. 1st Class Melissa McNorton, the brigade's senior career counselor.

Assigned to Company A, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, Dalindin's road to reenlistment in Iraq was a long one.

He grew up in the Philippines, moving to the United States with his father at 18 and leaving his high school sweetheart, Geralyn Santillan, behind.

His new home was National City, Calif., which Dalindin still calls home - although he has spent the past five years at Fort Hood, Texas.

"The poverty level (in the Philippines) was very bad," Dalindin said. "You could apply for everything and never get a job. My dad said he was bringing us to the

United States, and I didn't hesitate. There was no future for me in the Philippines."

One year later, in May 2001, Dalindin joined the Army.

"I wanted to become a U.S. citizen, and I thought that serving in the military would be a good way to do that," he said. "I was excited about joining the Army."

After serving in Iraq from 2004 to 2005, Dalindin went back to the Philippines to marry Geralyn. They now have an 11-month-old daughter named Trishelle. His wife and daughter live in the Philippines, but Dalindin is trying to take them to the States, sending part of his \$15,000 reenlistment bonus to them for plane tickets when they are able to make the move, he said.

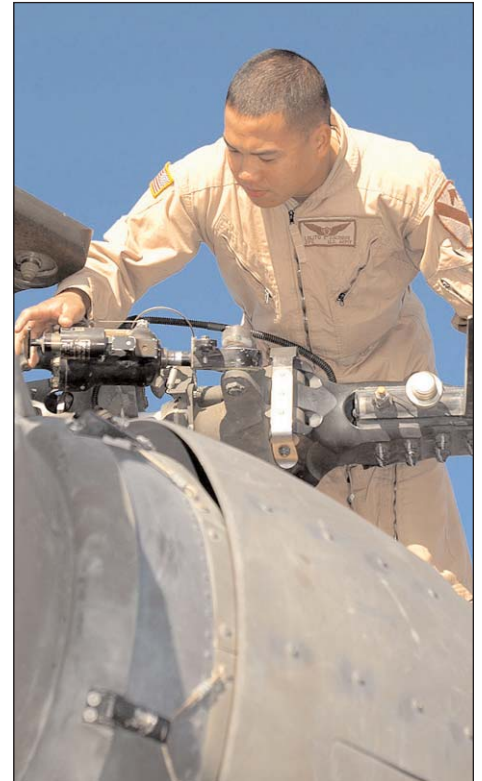
Five years after he joined the Army, on May 12, Dalindin became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Although he doesn't know if he will make the Army a career, he didn't hesitate when it came to reenlisting for six years - which will take his total enlistment to 11 years.

"He had a plan to reenlist, and he went for it; he stuck with it," said Staff Sgt. Kirk Williams, Dalindin's platoon sergeant. "He's a good guy, a hard worker. He may be a little wet behind the ears as a leader, but he is a good Soldier. I'll fly with him any time."

Dalindin is well aware of the Army's detractors, both at home in the United States and abroad.

"They are entitled to their opinion," he said. "I don't understand why some people who were born American won't serve or support their country. A lot of them may be afraid to serve in the military. But, here I am; this is not my first country - I am a new



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, 1st ACB)

**Spc. Lolito Dalindin, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, goes through pre-flight inspections Dec. 2, on a UH-60 Black Hawk.**

American - and I serve it still." Of course for every detractor is someone who supports the U.S. military and their mission in Iraq.

"When people see you at the airport for (rest and recuperation) leave, they say: 'Thank you for serving.' That makes all of the effort and the hard work that comes with serving here just disappear, because they are so appreciative of what we do."

Complacency  
Kills

Don't become a statistic by being complacent.

Don't take short cuts.

Remain vigilant.

Perform all tasks to standard.